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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000981

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: POLICE DISRUPT DIYALA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL INAUGURAL
SESSION

REF: A. BAGHDAD 64
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 544
[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 628

Classified By: PMIN Robert Ford for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. SUMMARY (C) Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP)/Tawafuq leaders in Diyala report that the GOI attempted to arrest three of its newly elected Provincial Council (PC) members on April 6, at a meeting to elect the new Diyala governor. There are unconfirmed reports of a fourth warrant. The operation was conducted by Diyala Iraqi police (IP), apparently under the authority of the outgoing governor and the Diyala Operations Command (to judge by their signatures on the warrants). Nobody was actually arrested because of the intervention of Iraqi National Security Advisor Mowaffaq Rubai'e. IIP leaders claim that the warrants are politically motivated efforts to prevent Sunnis from forming a new government. They also fear that there may be another, successful attempt to execute the warrants at the next meeting to elect a new governor. END SUMMARY.

Governor's Selection Interrupted

[1](#)2. (C) On April 6, the newly elected Diyala provincial council met for the first time, intending to elect its chairman, a new governor and deputy governor. Hamdi Hassoun al Mehdi, a leading member of the IIP/Tawafuq in Diyala, told us that around 1200 local time, Diyala police (IP) surrounded the Diyala government building. According to Hassoun, the IP then presented warrants for the arrest of three IIP/Tawafuq members of the new council: Mohamad Hussain Jassim, Dhiyab Saab Khalil and Ishmail Ibrahim Farhan. Subsequent inquiries of the Diyala Operations Command (DOC) by the Diyala PRT team leader indicated that there was a fourth warrant, but that the DOC Commander, Tariq al Dulaymi, did not have the name on it. The PRT Team Leader also reports that he saw copies of the warrants.

[1](#)3. (C) Hassoun and others began calling both USG and GOI officials for assistance. Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, also of the IIP, called Iraqi National Security Advisor Rubai'e, Hashimi's chief of staff told us on April 6. The chief of staff speculated that Rubai'e gave the order to the IP team to stand down. As of 1500 local time, Hassoun reported that the IIP/Tawafuq members had not been detained and had been allowed to return to their homes. PRT Diyala confirmed half an hour later that no arrests had been made. According to Hassoun, however, the IIP/Tawafuq members are afraid that the warrants may be executed in the near future, possibly on April 9, when the next attempt to elect provincial officials is to be made. Hassoun requested US protection and intercession to prevent the execution of the warrants.

[1](#)4. (C) According to Hassoun, the charges on the warrants are for terrorism. He also claimed that the issuing authorities' signatures were those of the outgoing governor Raad Hamid Jawad (an independent Shi'a), and DOC commander Tariq al

Dulaymi. Several USG entities are attempting to get copies of the warrants.

15. (C) Local media are reporting that CF impeded the IP in the discharge of their duties in this incidence, which is untrue. MND-N has disseminated a press release refuting the claim, but cannot control whether the press release will be picked up by Iraqi news outlets. After General Odierno asked him about the Diyala situation, Prime Minister Maliki said April 6 evening that he would rescind the arrest orders in Diyala.

16. (C) IIP/Tawafuq members have claimed before (reftels) that the arrests are politically motivated efforts to prevent Sunni Arab leaders from forming a new provincial government in Diyala. Hassoun told poloffs in early March that there was an arrest warrant on terrorism charges against him, although no such warrant has yet been executed. IIP leaders in Diyala and in Baghdad have told the Embassy that the situation in the street is very tense, and that they will make a public statement about the targeting. While the Embassy has no further information on the validity of the charges, PRT Diyala reports that IHEC officials had confirmed that each winning candidate met all electoral requirements, and had no connections to terrorism, before certifying the election results on March 28.

Comment

17. (C) The attempted arrests of Sunni politicians in a volatile province in which Sunnis greatly increased their

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representation in the January provincial elections is potentially explosive. Our immediate efforts, in addition to having encouraged calm at the chaotic scene on April 6, are aimed at ascertaining whether valid warrants have actually been produced for these attempted arrests, or any others among Diyala politicians. If so, we will have little standing to object to a legal Iraqi procedure, although we are making it clear to the GOI the potential political downsides of arresting newly elected council members in a province where sectarian and ethnic conflict is still as problematic as Diyala.

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